

GENESIS 11:31—12:1-9

LESSON: ABRAM CALLED BY GOD — June 2, 2019

HISTORY:

We see that in this **CHAPTER 11** the people had already begun to build a tower to God, known as the Tower of Babel where they worked together, spoke the same language, on one accord, making way for their own security. So they thought. Man was building a secular world devoid of the true God; acting independently of the true God while worshiping idols. This was of works not of faith or by the Spirit of God. No person could by works or efforts penetrate heaven. Babylon was where the false religion was born upon the earth after the flood. Therefore, the Tower of Babel was a religious center, a temple-tower built as a stairway to heaven in the shape of a pyramid. It was built but they didn't get to do what they thought they were going to do, for God came down to see, He and disrupted everything. God saw:

- The unity • the one language • the people had great capability • and He saw pride and evil in their purpose.

God knew that man was going to exclude Him out of the picture as their living God, so God pronounced His verdict. Two things happened:

1. God constrained and confounded man's evil purpose by confusing man's language. Their communication and language was not the same. Their cultures were never supposed to be the same because we benefit from other cultures; we grow and develop in our minds and thoughts from God.
2. God constrained and confused man's evil purpose by scattering the people over the face of the whole earth. They gradually drifted away from what they couldn't understand, and therefore God could give them newer insights.

If a worldwide empire was allowed to rule the world, then a godless empire would rule rather than God, and He could not raise up a people through whom He could send the Promised seed, the Savior of the world. God showed them mercy, thus confusing the language and scattering the people over the earth, God was stopping man's godless purpose, but was also preparing to save man by raising up a godly people.

Then the genealogy of man is listed and we see that Terah moves his family to another city as He scattered them. It seems that God led them to the places they were to go, for God knows the where, when and places we are to be used in.

INTRODUCTION:

GENESIS 11 began with the plans of man, but we will find out that God has His own plans for man. ¹In the last few verses of Genesis 11 we see the necessary preparation of Abram's faith. Verses 27-32 focus on Terah, the father of Abram. Terah actually had three sons—Abram, Nahor and Haran. **Verse 28** says *Haran died in Ur of the Chaldees (his birthplace) while his father, Terah was alive.* **Verse 29** Nahor and Abram took wives. Abram married his half-sister Sarai, while his brother Nahor married their orphaned niece, Micah, who was the daughter of their brother Haran; and she had a sister named Iscah. Now, **verse 30** adds this note: *"Now Sarai was barren; she had no children."*

LESSON: I. DIRECTION FROM GOD GENESIS 11:31—12:3

11:31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. To understand this better, Terah took his son

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¹ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/2002-10-06-Hope-for-Tomorrow-How-God-Keeps-His-Promises/>

www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html

Abram, his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; but they stopped instead at the city of Haran and settled there. His other son, Nahor chose to stay in Ur. Canaan was their place of destination, however they settled in the city of Haran. Sometimes we stop short or fall short of what God wants. We can't forget that Terah and his family worshiped idols, but he still moved from what he was used to' he moved from his place of comfort.

11:32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran. However, Terah died in Haran at the age of 205. That was evidently a period of many years.

Genesis CHAPTER 12 is all about God's plans.

12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, — Only after his father's death did Abram hear the Lord's voice. Abram was in Haran when this call came to get out of proceed on the journey to Canaan. This was not the place to stay. The word "*Haran*" means "*parched*," and it was indeed a parched and barren place to live. If you stop and consider what it means, the last few verses of Genesis 11 and the beginning of Chapter 12 are all about death and loss and a series of separations in Abram's life. He was ...

- Separated from his Homeland when he left Ur of the Chaldees.
- Separated from his Family when his brother and his father died.
- Separated from his Destination when he stayed for many years in Haran.
- Separated from his Dream when his wife was unable to have children.

Any one of these four separations would be a heavy burden for any man to bear. Taken together, they represent the shaping of his faith and his character through adversity. Looking back, we can see that these things were necessary in order to prepare Abram to become Abraham ("father of multitudes), the supreme biblical example of a man of faith, and the father of the Jewish nation. He was told to:

1. Leave your country: *comfortable surroundings*.
2. Leave your relatives: *influence*.
3. Leave your Father's House: *security*.

After all that he had endured, Abram's greatest days were yet to come. Weeping endures for a night but joy comes in the morning. Let that thought encourage you as you consider God's work in your life. The pain you are going through is not for nothing. He takes away the things we thought we couldn't live without in order to give us something better and more satisfying. We yield the temporal to gain the eternal. We give up the things we could not keep in order to receive those things we can never lose. Originally from Ur but now in Haran was the place of his father. God had to show him some place different.

12:1e ...unto a land that I will shew thee:— We must conclude that Abram did not know where he was going. First thing first was to separate himself from all that was important to him, then God could show him or direct him to a land that was the promise. Thus, his stay in Haran was not a result of disobedience. Note how the promise given to Abram parallels the promise to the believer. Abram was to inherit the Promised Land if he turned away from the world and followed God. We are to inherit the Promised Land of heaven if we turn away from the world and follow God. The Promised Land is a symbol, a type, a picture of heaven. However, their Promised Land of Canaan would be their inheritance!

12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:— The command of instructions was given in verse 1. Now the promises or incentives are now presented to Abram. His leaving his country, his kindred, and his father's house was made clear to him.

Obedience is the key word we look for in Abram to carry out such commands.

1. Then and only then could God **"make him a great nation."** The nation to which he had thus far belonged to was sinking into idolatry. God's promise to Abram was to make him a **"great nation"** and that would have to include descendants; offspring that would populate a nation! If there were to be a nation, there had to be a new race of people: the Jews, the nation of Israel; and this nation would be obedient to God! The implication of the word "nation" here is that God's promise will be made great; far beyond the lifetime of Abraham.
2. Only God could **"bless him"** bringing him past earthly joys that were spent through the influence of kindred or even the place of his birth. God would look after and care for Abram with both the joy of a promised child and descendants (*seeds of Abraham*), whether biological or spiritual offspring, connecting the past with the future.
3. Only God could **"make his name great."** He would out measure the name given in his father's house. God found Abraham while he was still an idolater living in a pagan culture. ²A "great name" involves a heritage. In the ancient Middle Eastern culture it was always defined by family and descendants who carry on the name and legacy (which includes reputation).
4. **"Being a blessing"** means that Abram is an agent of blessing and not just its recipient. It connects the blessing of Abram with the blessings of others; i.e. if I'm blessed, those in my household are also blessed, and those I touch are blessed. The purpose of Abram's blessing is to bless others; he supplies a need for others.

A nation and a name are only made by God! And they are going to be made great! In other words, the future lies with God, not with Abram or Sarai.

12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Abram is called into a future that he does not know. God desires blessings for Abram. Those that bless him and his descendants, treat him with respect, and care for him will be blessed. God says, I will identify myself with you. However, those who curse Abram and his descendants are those who treat him lightly, despise him, or treat him with contempt. God's curse for such lack of respect and disdain was to involve the harshest of divine judgments.

12:3b ...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. When Abram responds faithfully to God's call, he can bring blessings for many believers. Therefore, this is but true identification of sonship.

II. OBEDIENCE TO GOD GENESIS 12:4-9

Abram journeys through Canaan (vv4-6)

12:4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. To my understanding it was supposed to only be Abram and Sarai to leave the country. As Abraham went, he may have doubted, but he went. He may have argued, but he went. He may have wondered, but he went. However, he brought his nephew Lot with him. This was partial obedience. I guess he thought it would be alright with God. He would have to see what consequences this would bring. This move would be a life changing turnaround that would completely change his life. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. That shows us that age is no hindrance to faith in taking bold steps for the Lord. Many people change jobs like that; they just get up and move to another city or country. I believe it would only be by faith, not on a whim.

12:5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had

gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. Those that took that faith walk with Abram had to believe if not on God's Word, but on Abram's obedience of faith. Nothing whatsoever is said about Sarai or Lot opposing Abram, and nothing is said about Abram forcing or coercing them to go. The testimony of Abram's faith spoke to their hearts to also be obedient. Will our faith speak strongly to others hearts? One's faith would have to be strong in order to step out on nothing. And what I mean by strong, is being strongly committed to God; displaying obedience without whining. So now we see they have arrived in the land of Canaan.

12:6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. ³This is more than just a record of what happened to Abram when he first entered the land. This is a very accurate picture of the conditions of a Spirit-filled life. The first thing we are told is that Abram passed through the land (Canaan) to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. These names are most revealing. "*Shechem*" means "shoulder," and the shoulder is to the Hebrew a symbol of strength. The name "*Moreh*" means "instruction" and when we combine these two words, we get our first glimpse of what it is like in the land. Once Abram arrived in the land, the Canaanites were also in the land. Aha, enemies will have to be confronted as your faith increases. This second picture we have here is that life in the land is to be a life of constant conflict. This is what God is showing us. You can't be distracted because God says, I will show, I will make...I will bless, I will make...and you shall be.... You have to remain steadfast and unmovable in the promises because they yet await! These Canaanites were the pagan tribes which afflicted Israel all through their history. We have to go through the conflict to receive the promise!

Abram worship God in that land (vv7-9)

12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. God didn't lead where he would not be. Yes God appeared and spoke to Abram about giving the land to his seed. Well we know it's in the future because Abram didn't have any children to receive the blessing at that time. There is ⁴a life of continual cleansing, for we next read, "*So he built there an altar to the Lord.*" An altar is more than a symbol of worship. An altar is first a place of cleansing, which provides the basis for worship. **The reason for a daily altar is the urgent need for cleansing in the believer's life. The altar had at least seven purposes:**

1. To **offer sacrifices to God**, asking forgiveness for unbelief and sins.
2. To make a **rededication to God**, renewing his commitment to God.
3. To **seek God's continued presence and guidance**.
4. To **worship the Lord**: to worship the very person who had met his need.
5. To **acknowledge the Lord**, that the Lord alone could fulfill so great a promise, that he was totally dependent upon the Lord.
6. To **praise the Lord**, to praise Him for giving so wonderful a promise.
7. To **testify of the Lord**, to bear witness of the Lord's glorious goodness in meeting his need and in giving so great a promise.

Abram was moved to worship God. He was establishing spiritual markers for the faith journey of Israel. He was laying down spiritual tracks here for people to follow. In your life, what hasn't manifested yet; what haven't you seen yet, well, you still need to worship God no matter what hasn't manifested, for it shall appear. Remember, you're in a faith journey, and God will always appear to the faithful! And also remember that God called Abram!

12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called

upon the name of the LORD. At every opportunity in each place Abram built an altar unto the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. ⁵The fourth point is that this is a life of unending choices. Now Abram pitches his tent between Bethel on the west and Hai (Ai) on the east. "**Bethel**" means "*the house of God*," and "**Ai**" means "*ruin*." This is an example of where our Christian lives take a turn: we're either looking to the things of God, or staying in the ruin of the flesh. We can choose to go to Bethel or to Ai; to Christ or to self — it can never be both. I am either pleasing myself, or pleasing God. I am either at Bethel, the house of God, or at Ai, the place of ruin. I must continually choose and not straddle. Abram responded by building an altar to worship God. This outlined Abraham's physical journey, and also marked his faith journey to his calling.

12:9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. Abram's journey continued. He never stopped for long. He lived in a tent because he was a pilgrim in the land. He could never settle down; he could only sojourn for awhile. "Negev"—"Negah" was the desert wasteland that was south of Israel. It was sometimes simply called the south.

SUMMARY:

God scattered the people because He has a plan for them and Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, and left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; but they stopped instead at the city of Haran and settled there. Terah died in Haran at the age of 205 (11:31-32).

Abraham is in his own country, he is among his own family, and he is in his father's house. That means he is protected, he has support, he has everything in hand that he needs. It would be easy to settle for the status quo that leads nowhere. Abram was to leave the security of the past to embrace the possibility of the future. This was God's command. As Abram went, God would show him the land; make him a great nation; bless him; make his name great; and he would be a blessing for all nations (12:1-3).

God promised remarkable things for his future and Abram did respond faithfully in obedience and went just as the Lord had told him. His father Terah had already migrated to Haran but later died there. He left Haran began his journey south to the place that God had called him. This would mean: Abram's journey from Haran to Canaan was only the completion of what his father had begun. Abram took his wife and his brother's son Lot and a portion of the clan and their possessions and journeyed south to the land of Canaan. As he arrived in Canaan, God reaffirmed His promise and gave more detail: "**To your offspring I will give this land.**" Abram passed through the land into Sichem, and Moreh and the Canaanites were also in the land. Abram responded by building an altar thereby acknowledging God as the one leading him in this journey, and God appeared to him. Every place he went, he built an altar unto God. He didn't stay in Canaan but passed through. At this point Bethel was on the west, and Hai was on the east, then he traveled, and continued toward the Negev, the south (12:4-9)

Callings bring great challenges that will begin with complete obedience to God. As He gives us opportunities to share our blessings or good fortune with others, we will come to know that it's not all about us, but about others.

APPLICATION:

Is there something in your life that you know God wants you to do, but you have not done it yet? What steps can you take to obey God? — Because it's not too late to share it.